

asked to report their use of paracetamol, aspirin, and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen and naproxen.

Multivariable analyses were used to adjust for age; body mass index; history of hypertension, raised cholesterol concentrations, diabetes, or cardiovascular disease; physical activity; and use of other analgesics.

Kidney function was assessed from tests of creatinine clearance and blood creatinine concentration taken at the conclusion of the study. Raised creatinine concentrations were defined as ≥ 1.5 mg/dl, and reduced creatinine clearance was defined as ≤ 55 ml/min.

Overall, 460 men (4.2%) had raised creatinine concentrations and 1258 (0.4%) had reduced creatinine clearance.

The investigators found that men who reported taking 2500 or more analgesic pills over the study period (equivalent to three or four pills a week) were no more likely to show signs of renal damage than men who rarely or never used such painkillers.

The study indicates that taking an average of three or four pills of analgesics a week is safe for the kidneys. However, analgesic nephropathy is more common in women than in men. The authors acknowledge that the study is only on men but "saw no biological reason why they wouldn't apply to women."

Deborah Josefson *San Francisco*

Radiation dose in scans could be halved

The radiation dose in some chest examinations using computed axial tomography can be more than halved without jeopardising the radiologist's ability to make a diagnosis, a new study has said (*American Journal of Roentgenology* 2001;177:279-84).

To find the minimum radiation dose needed to maintain good image quality in computed axial tomography, the radiologists took six sets of images of 10 patients using a current of 40-280 milliamperes per

second (mAs), which produced doses of 90-600 millirem (mrem). Five radiologists reviewed all of the images for each patient, ranking them according to quality. The reviewers were not aware of the doses used for each image.

Before the study, the standard radiographic technique was to use a current of 280 mAs, producing a dose of 600 mrem. Yet the radiologists could not tell the difference between images taken at that current and those taken at 160 mAs—a dose of 340 mrem. Although a further reduction of the current to 120 mAs—producing a dose of 260 mrem—did produce a noticeable reduction of image quality, the radiologists decided that it was insufficient to justify exposing the patient to the additional radiation.

David Spurgeon *Quebec*

Early bypass surgery increases risk of stroke

Patients who have a coronary artery bypass graft soon after experiencing unstable angina or non-Q wave myocardial infarcts face a higher risk of stroke than those who forgo the surgery or delay it, according to a study (*Circulation* 2001;104:269-74).

The study suggested that physicians should rethink the advisability of early aggressive surgical revascularisation after heart attacks. Dr Lisa Cronin and colleagues from McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, studied the risk of stroke after ischaemic events in 18151 patients enrolled in the Organization to Assess Strategies for Ischemic Syndromes, a registry of patients who were admitted to hospital with unstable angina and non-Q wave myocardial infarcts.

Patients who had bypass surgery were nearly four times more likely to have a subsequent stroke than those who did not. Additionally, the risk of stroke rose in those who had bypass surgery within two weeks of their heart attack.

Deborah Josefson *San Francisco*

Kyoto protocol rescued in Bonn

Kathryn Sheridan *Bonn*

Success came at the 11th hour at United Nations climate talks in Bonn as the future of the Kyoto protocol was saved by a last minute compromise.

Ministers from 174 countries went into an all night session and an unplanned fifth day of talks as negotiators and the conference chairman—the Dutch environment minister, Jan Pronk—tried to break the deadlock on the main issue of disagreement, legal penalties. This centred on whether to have legally binding penalties for countries failing to meet their emissions targets, a proposal strongly opposed by Japan, Canada, and Russia.

Although the text, agreed after marathon negotiations, was watered down from Mr Pronk's compromise proposal, the adoption of the draft decision on 23 July is being seen as a major political victory.

However, although some parties are critical that the deal is too weak, all are relieved that something has been agreed. Even if this deal only achieves a return to 1990 emissions levels, it would still be an improvement.

The European environment commissioner, Margot Wallström, called the deal "imperfect" but said: "We have started something so important today. It's important to see the bigger picture."

Mr Pronk said that reconvening the talks after they broke down in The Hague in November 2000 had been "risky," particularly since the US rejection of the treaty in March. Agreement was reached on the other sticking points—notably, "sinks" (the amount of land and forests that can be used as credits against an emissions reduction target because they absorb carbon). The issue of sinks was held responsible for the collapse of the talks in The Hague.

The European Union also compromised on allowing sinks to be included in the clean development mechanism—a "flexible" mechanism giving industrialised countries credit for environmental and clean energy projects in developing countries. But in return the European Union insisted that nuclear energy could not be used to generate credits under the clean development mechanism. They also imposed a cap to limit the use of overseas sinks.

The European Union, along with Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland, has promised £293m (\$410m) a year by 2005 for the three funds to help developing countries, as agreed in the compromise deal. These are an adaptation fund, a climate change fund, and a fund for the least developed countries. □



The water installation "Climate accident", by German activist-artist Kurt Jotter greeted delegates at the Bonn talks